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SUBJECT: USAU: AMISOM MEETING UNDERSCORES FRUSTRATION,
PLEAS FOR TROOPS, FUNDS, EQUIPMENT

THIS MESSAGE IS FROM USAU AMBASSADOR MICHAEL A. BATTLE.

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY: At a December 14 meeting at the AU, AMISOM stakeholders and partners expressed their frustration with the ongoing danger in Somalia and discussed how to improve the situation. Many underscored the need to enhance the TFG and its security forces, as well as the need for partners to make good on troop, funding, and equipment commitments. AU Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra discussed transforming AMISOM into a UN force. Participants also addressed the utility of training in the absence of sufficient equipment and timely troop payments. The lack of change in the overall situation and concomitant frustration has led key players to urge those involved to think outside the box, and to transfer more responsibility to the Somali people. END SUMMARY.

FRUSTRATION WITH DIRE SITUATION

¶12. (SBU) African Union (AU) Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra chaired a December 14 meeting in Addis Ababa of the African Union Commission, Ministers of Defense of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs), and partners. During the meeting, participants reiterated their frustration with the dire situation in Somalia. The AMISOM Force Commander, Major General Nathan Mugisha, noted the strong influence of al-Shabaab, particularly in Mogadishu in recent weeks. He listed the following nine challenges that AMISOM faces:

-- An inadequate number of troops for both AMISOM and Transitional Federal Government forces (TFG)
-- Stakeholders' understanding of the AMISOM mandate and the limitations that restrict their assistance
-- TFG's lack of cohesion
-- Operational limitations, such as the small maritime force that covers only a fraction of Somalia's 3000 km coast
-- Lack of capability to track aircraft going in and out of Mogadishu (NOTE: The reason for wanting an air traffic control system, as Mugisha seemed to be saying, was not clear, even after asking for clarification. END NOTE.)
-- Difficulty deploying other components such as humanitarian aid
-- Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), suicide bombers, pirates, and spoilers
-- Difficulty obtaining timely information

¶13. (SBU) Given AMISOM's high level of frustration in Somalia, meeting participants discussed possible ways to improve AMISOM's efforts. Several speakers mentioned the need to empower the TFG, enhance Somali capacity, and focus on the "Somalization of forces." The Ugandan Ambassador to Ethiopia and the AU, Mull Katende, stated that AMISOM could follow its mandate, but the "security of the country is the responsibility of the Somalis."

¶14. (SBU) During the meeting, Lamamra stated that AMISOM should become a UN force. AMISOM represents the international community, he reasoned, and UN involvement will help to ensure that the international community can reach its objectives in Somalia. He reiterated this point the following day at an AU Partners Group Peace and Security meeting, explaining that the AU and UN are building a hybrid force in Somalia. The UN will handle logistics, while the AU will supply human resources. The ultimate goal is to transform AMISOM into a UN peace-keeping operation, though the UN balks at this notion, saying there is no peace to keep in Somalia.

¶15. (SBU) While the UN has agreed to get involved by providing logistical support, there are limitations on what it can contribute, a fact referenced in the meeting on AMISOM. The UN cannot, for example, pay salaries to Somali forces or fund the purchase of lethal equipment with assessed contributions.

The UN-administered trust funds, one for AMISOM and the

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other for the TFG, also have various strings attached that may make for a more complicated picture than Lamamra paints.

UNFULFILLED COMMITMENTS

¶16. (SBU) Much discussion focused on AMISOM's unfulfilled needs in terms of troops, funds, and equipment. The Force Commander reminded participants of the commitment Djibouti made to contribute troops to AMISOM, while others urged their African counterparts to step up to the plate as TCCs. (NOTE: No potential additional TCCs besides Djibouti were mentioned specifically. END NOTE). The issue of delays in the payments of stipends arose, with European Union (EU) representatives assuring those present that over five million euro should have reached the AU by day's end, as well as 30 million euro before Christmas to make troop payment possible.

Participants also discussed lack of equipment as an impediment to success. On a positive note, the UN will start to reimburse TCCs for non-lethal, Contingent Owned Equipment (i.e. TCC-owned equipment used in Somalia). In general, participants sung a familiar refrain that commitments have not been honored in a timely fashion, negatively impacting the mission in Somalia and allowing al-Shabaab to gain strength.

¶17. (SBU) Significant debate centered around the utility of training troops. The Force Commander stated that AMISOM's recommended process was to "train massively," and the EU discussed its substantial training efforts. The Somali Foreign Minister, however, argued that "training is OK when the situation is normal, but we need to turn the tide against insurgencies." Given the exceptional situation in Somalia, and the lack of sufficient equipment and timely troop payments, he felt that training would not make AMISOM or Somali forces effective. Moreover, AMISOM and its partners could end up training the enemy if dissatisfied troops join the insurgents. Ugandan Ambassador Katende emphasized the need not simply to train and equip troops, but also to retain them with regular pay, competent leadership, basic equipment, and esprit de corps.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: Recurring difficulties on the ground in Somalia have left those involved frustrated and desperate for stakeholders and partners to make good on their promises. In recent months, Lamamra has indicated the need to brainstorm new approaches and think outside the box. At the December 15 meeting with partner Ambassadors, he asked, "Are we winning or are we wasting time, energy, and resources just to maintain the status quo?" He then noted that developing a new strategy in the coming weeks or months would be appropriate. His repeated call for more resources to go to the Somali Security Forces, and his confidence in an AU/UN hybrid force in Somalia, could signal the AU's desire to relinquish a degree of responsibility for AMISOM. As Lamamra put it, "AMISOM should not be seen as a substitute for the Somali Security Forces." END COMMENT.

MUSHINGI